



2010 Local listening campaign Grassroots experiences of working-age poverty

Action pack

Thank you for deciding to take part in this project, which is being run by Community Links and Church Action on Poverty. We want to uncover people's views on poverty, work and unemployment amongst people of working age. This pack will help you to run a local listening campaign in your area.

About our working-age poverty programme

Did you know that of the seven million people deemed 'economically inactive' in the UK, two million would like to work? Or that last year 22% of women were in jobs earning less than £7 an hour? Or that many people moving off benefits into work end up no better off?

There are all sorts of reasons why people of working age end up living in poverty.

As part of the European Year to Combat Poverty and Social Exclusion, Community Links and Church Action on Poverty are working to uncover, raise awareness of, and begin to tackle some of these issues.

We've always believed that people who experience a problem understand it best, so we're starting by asking people experiencing poverty what needs to change. Once we've agreed on the most important issues, both perceptions that need challenging and policies that need changing, we'll set about doing just that.

We want you to run a **listening campaign** in your organisation, project or local area, and help us to identify the issues that we should focus on.

What is a listening campaign?

The activity can take any form you like. All we ask is that you talk to people with experience of poverty, and find out what they think needs to be done. We want you to tell us about three policy issues and/or three 'myths' that they think need to be tackled.

In this pack, we've suggested three different kinds of listening activity that you could choose from, and given you some guidance and resources to help you run them successfully. They come in a 'menu' of increasingly ambitious ideas:

- **Listening campaign idea 1: Participatory workshop**
A simple workshop that you can run with a small group of people in a couple of hours.
- **Listening campaign idea 2: One-to-one interviews**
A series of in-depth one-to-one interviews that can be carried out over a longer period of time.
- **Listening campaign idea 3: Poverty hearing**
A public event to which power-holders are invited, which will take a lot of planning.

Of course, if you don't want to use our ideas, you can come up with your own way of running a listening campaign.

Free training available

If you registered with us, you should have received a voucher entitling you to free training from Community Links or Church Action on Poverty. We'll email you with details of training workshops that are available in your region.

What happens next?

We need you to complete your listening campaign by the end of July 2010. Once you've finished your campaign, we need you to feed back to us the three policy issues or myths that you've identified. This action pack includes a form you can use to send us your feedback – or you can submit your feedback online at www.surveymonkey.com/s/ey2010feedback. Please send us your feedback as soon as you can.

The listening campaign is just the beginning. Once we have held events all around the country and collated the results, we will do two things:

- Pick one or two issues and myths and develop them into national campaigns, holding dialogue meetings in September with the groups that suggested them in the first place. We will also hold policy forums in November, which may lead to some of the national campaigns continuing into 2011.
- Support organisations through training and guidance to campaign locally on issues that were raised in the meetings. Once we receive your feedback, we'll send you a second action pack to help you carry out your own campaigning work.

Now read on, and decide what kind of listening campaign you plan to run!

Listening campaign idea 1

Participatory workshop

This is an outline for a listening activity that can be run in a single session, with a small group of people who have experience of poverty. The participants could be clients of your project or organisation, or any other people with relevant experience. The session should take two and a half hours.

Aims of the workshop

- To discuss how government policies affect people of working age who are in poverty.
- To discuss the myths and misperceptions that exist around working-age poverty.
- To identify three policies that must be changed, or myths that must be tackled, in order to improve things for working-age people in poverty.

Themes for the workshop

We have identified three 'themes' or categories of working-age poverty. We suggest that you focus on one of these categories in your workshop:

- **In-work poverty:** policies and myths that affect people who are already in work, but still live in poverty (perhaps because of low wages or insecure employment)
- **Getting-into-work poverty:** policies and myths that affect people who are out of work but looking for a job
- **Out-of-work poverty:** policies and myths that affect people who can't work, or are not looking for a job (carers, for example)

Hopefully it will be straightforward to decide which theme to explore – perhaps your organisation works with unemployed people, for example.

Preparation and materials required

The workshop can be facilitated by one person, ideally with support from two or three extra volunteers for some of the work in small groups. As facilitator you should familiarise yourself in advance with the outline of the workshop, the issues you wish to explore, and the information you need to record in order to feed back to the national organisers,

You will need a flipchart, pens, stickers, blu-tack and scrap paper or sticky notes.

General notes for the facilitator

There are many policies and myths that can have an impact on working-age poverty, including health, employment, economic regeneration, transport, social security and equal opportunities. You may want to use case studies or stories to stimulate discussion about the impact of policy and to assist people to reflect upon their own experience.

Community Links and Church Action on Poverty have published a series of articles and case studies which you may find useful. You can find them on our EY2010 blog at www.community-links.org/linksuk/?cat=727 – or download them as a booklet at www.community-links.org/uploads/editor/LearningFromTheExperts.pdf

Activity 1: Introduction (15 minutes)

Ask everyone to give their name. Explain to them how this listening campaign relates to your organisation's work, and how it fits into the wider working-age poverty programme and the European Year to Combat Poverty and Social Exclusion.

Activity 2: Icebreaker (20 minutes)

Ask each person to sit next to someone they don't know. They should chat each way for two minutes, and find out: their partner's name; why they are interested in the workshop; and one thing they would like the group to know about them. Then ask each person to introduce their partner to the group based on the three answers.

Activity 3: Background (15 minutes)

Present the group with some facts and figures about working-age poverty, focusing on the 'category' you have chosen for the workshop (in-work, getting-into-work or out-of-work – see above). See www.church-poverty.org.uk or www.community-links.org/linksuk/?cat=727 for relevant information.

You may want to use a flipchart, or handouts, or even a *PowerPoint*, to present the information. A quiz can also be a good way to deal with statistics – or you could give out statistics on a sheet and ask the group what surprises them. Ensure that as well as information on poverty, you provide some information about employment and unemployment, health, education, etc. Pick statistics carefully – it's easy to overwhelm people!

Activity 4: Exploring experiences of poverty (60 minutes)

Working in small groups, explore people's own experiences of poverty. Ask them to focus on the two key questions:

- What national policies make it difficult for you to get out of poverty? How do they need to change?
- What public myths or misperception about poverty have you encountered? How can we challenge them?

There should be a facilitator for each small group. Emphasise that this needs to be a reflection on participants' own experience.

You may find it helpful to use case studies or stories to spark discussion (see www.community-links.org/linksuk/?cat=727). If your group needs guidance on what policies might affect them, you could also download Community Links' working-age poverty fact sheet, which gives a short breakdown of each political party's policies on working-age poverty.

Get each small group to record the policies and myths on sticky notes.

Activity 5: Identifying the key issues (30 minutes)

Bring the group back together and collate all the sticky notes in one display, clustering them so that all the stickies relating to a particular policy area or myth are together.

Ask people to work in pairs or threes, and pick the three policies or myths that they feel are most important. Then have a plenary discussion and get the whole group to agree the three policies or myths that they want to feed back to the national organisers of the programme.

Activity 6: Closing session (10 minutes)

Check that everyone is happy for all the issues discussed to be documented. Ensure that no participants have confidentiality issues that must be addressed, and then summarise the discussion. Explain to people how their ideas will be taken forward.

Don't forget to send in your feedback afterwards – and include contact details for all the people who took part! Use the form at the back of this pack, or visit www.surveymonkey.com/s/ey2010feedback

Listening campaign idea 2

One-to-one interviews

This is an outline for a more ambitious listening campaign, based on in-depth one-to-one interviews exploring people's experiences of working-age poverty. Staff or volunteers should carry out a series of these interviews with users of your project or other people you are in contact with. You need to record all the results, and analyse them to identify the key issues.

This approach comes from the *Sustainable Livelihoods Handbook*, produced by Church Action on Poverty with Oxfam. The Handbook includes extra participatory tools for use during interviews and for taking action afterwards, and can be downloaded at www.church-poverty.org.uk/livelihoods.

Aims of the interviews

- To learn how government policies affect people of working age who are in poverty.
- To find out about myths and misperceptions that exist around working-age poverty.
- To identify three policies that must be changed, or myths that must be tackled, in order to improve things for working-age people in poverty.

Themes for the campaign

We have identified three 'themes' or categories of working-age poverty. It is likely that each of your interviews will fall into one of these categories, and you may find it helpful to group them together. (Or maybe you work exclusively with people from just one category, for example unemployed people.)

- **In-work poverty:** policies and myths that affect people who are already in work, but still live in poverty (perhaps because of low wages or insecure employment)
- **Getting-into-work poverty:** policies and myths that affect people who are out of work but looking for a job
- **Out-of-work poverty:** policies and myths that affect people who can't work, or are not looking for a job (carers, for example)

Preparation and materials required

The interviewer should have a copy of the questions below, to guide the discussion. Do consider using extra handouts and other resources from the *Livelihoods Handbook* if you can (download it free at www.church-poverty.org.uk/livelihoods). You should also have some means of recording the information – either a tape recorder or dictaphone, or a second volunteer taking notes. All interviews should take place in private.

You will need to arrange a time in advance to interview each of your subjects. You could make special appointments with them, or carry out interviews during drop-in sessions or similar activities run by your organisation. Each interview should take about an hour. You should also record each interviewee's contact details, using the form at the back of this pack.

General notes for the interviewer

If you are recording the interview, you will need to ask the participant for their written consent, and explain carefully how you plan to use and store the recording. It is also a good idea to show them how to use the machine, and explain that it is fine for them to turn the machine off at any point.

Remember that you are looking particularly for two things: policy changes that would make a difference for people like your interviewee, and common myths and misperceptions about poverty.

Analysing and reporting

When all the interviews are complete, you should listen to your recordings or go through your notes, and pick out the three most important policy changes and/or myths that need to be addressed. Complete the feedback form at the back of this pack and return it to us, or visit www.surveymonkey.com/s/ey2010feedback to complete it online.

You may find that the interviews reveal other information that's useful in your work, or in campaigning. Remember to get the interview subject's permission if you want to use the interview material in any other way, for example in case studies.

Introduction

- Could you begin by telling me a little bit about yourself?
- What is the best thing about your life at the moment?
- What struggles do you face at the moment? (eg health, income, services)
- Who or what makes life better or worse?

Human assets

- How would you describe your health? Have you had any major changes in your health over the last five years or so?
- What kind of caring responsibilities do you and other household members have?
- What policy changes would help you to cope better with health problems?
- Are there any common myths or misperceptions about health and poverty?
- How did you do at school or college? Have you had any other training?
- Do any members of your household have any qualifications? Have they helped them in life?
- What policy changes would help you get more from education and training?
- Are there any common myths or misperceptions about education?

Public assets

- What local services do you use (eg Job Centre, SureStart Children's Centre, library)?
- What services do other people in your household use?
- What about other people who you spend time with (eg extended family, friends, neighbours) – what do they use?
- How easy it is to access local centres and resources? If it is difficult, what could be done to make it easier?
- Do you use public transport? What do you think about public transport in your area? How could it be improved?
- Are there any common myths or misperceptions about local services?

Social assets

- Who do you depend on for support?
- What activities do you do for fun? Whom do you do these activities with?
- What groups, networks or formal organisations are you part of? What about other members of your household?
- Are there policy changes which could help you to get more involved in your community or build stronger relationships?

Physical assets

- What accommodation do you live in?
- Who owns your property? Who is responsible for paying your rent or mortgage? Is the tenancy or mortgage in joint names?
- How much of your weekly/monthly income is spent on the mortgage or rent?
- Are there any common myths or misperceptions about housing and accommodation?

Financial assets

- What is your main income source, and how much does it bring in?
- Do you have other sources of money coming into the house?
- What money can you access from friends and family? What do you use this for?
- What about other people in the household? What income do they have? How do they spend it? Is there a difference between people's income and spending in the household?
- How is the household getting by on the current income?
- Are there any policy changes which could help you to have a more stable and adequate income?
- Are there any common myths or misperceptions about income (whether benefits or wages)?

Strengths and weaknesses

- What things might you be able to do in the next week, month or year (eg take up a training course, look for a (better) job, sort out childcare)?
- What are the things which prevent you getting work – or better work (eg not being able to afford childcare, ill health, debt, low wages, poor transport links)?
- How do the barriers you experience prevent you taking up the opportunities you have identified for yourself?
- Could you sum up your existing situation in a couple of sentences?
- Could you tell me one myth or misperception about poverty that affects your life directly?

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The information you've provided will be shared with some national organisations, who will campaign for change on some of the issues you've told us about. Would you be interested in getting involved in their campaigns, perhaps by joining group discussions or even speaking to the media about your experiences?

Listening campaign idea 3

Poverty hearing

This is an outline for a major public event, at which people with experience of working-age poverty can tell their stories and explain their concerns to power-holders and decision-makers. It's a demanding project to run but can have a powerful impact.

Aims of the hearing

- To provide the opportunity for working-age people with direct experience of poverty to speak out for themselves, while encouraging those with power, authority and different experiences to listen.
- To identify three policies that must be changed, or myths that must be tackled, in order to improve things for working-age people in poverty.
- To challenge local decision-makers and power-holders to do something about these issues.

Themes for the hearing

We have identified three 'themes' or categories of working-age poverty. Please consider how these relate to the people taking part in your hearing. You may want to focus on just one category (particularly if your organisation works with just one group, for example unemployed people). Or you may want to find people to speak about each of the themes.

- **In-work poverty:** policies and myths that affect people who are already in work, but still live in poverty (perhaps because of low wages or insecure employment)
- **Getting-into-work poverty:** policies and myths that affect people who are out of work but looking for a job
- **Out-of-work poverty:** policies and myths that affect people who can't work, or are not looking for a job (carers, for example)

General notes about poverty hearings

A poverty hearing can come in any size. Depending on the number of speakers you find, it might be a day-long conference or an evening event lasting a couple of hours. However it is organised, the process must give priority to listening to those who have direct experience of working-age poverty. You must take care to ensure respect and dignity for people who may feel vulnerable, and to work in partnership with them.

Step 1: Establish a planning group

Depending on your organisation, there may already be a group or committee which is well placed to organise a hearing, or you may need to set up a new group. Where possible, the group should include both those affected by poverty and people with no direct experience of it.

You will need to decide: how often the group meets; what tasks need to be done and by whom; how communication will take place between group members; and who will chair and take the minutes of meetings. Since you are planning a process of listening to people who do not often get the chance to speak, it is important that the group begins by listening sensitively to each other.

Step 2: Plan the event

a) Set a date for the hearing. Allow as much time as you can for the planning process, but bear in mind that the feedback from your event needs to be submitted by the end of July 2010.

b) Choose and research the issues which will be presented and explored at the hearing. You might, for example, want to focus on just one of the themes listed above. You should plan for people affected by these issues to be your key speakers.

c) Plan the structure of your hearing. This will largely be dependent upon whether the event is to cover a whole day, an afternoon or an evening. The agenda might include: time for registration; an introduction by the chairperson; an opening address by a local community leader; keynote speakers on particular issues; group discussions; overviews of issues by organisations working in the area; time for feedback from the audience; and a closing summary.

d) Identify and brief your speakers - people with direct experience of poverty. You must allow a

process and timescale for engaging with these people. If you want additional support or overview speakers, you will need to identify them and book them as soon as possible. Some people (especially people seeking asylum) may be reticent about speaking out in public. To get around this, their story could be prepared in advance and then read out by someone else.

e) Choose a chairperson who is sensitive to the issue of poverty and has a degree of empathy with those who will be speaking from their own experiences.

f) Set up a system for bookings and registration in advance, so that attendees know how to book a place and where and when registration will take place. This gives an indication of how many people are likely to attend, and a record of attendees that will be useful for following up afterwards.

g) Choose support people who will be on hand to help anyone who becomes distressed as a result of sharing their experiences, or of listening to others.

Step 3: Choose a venue

Once you've decided a date and time, you need to book a venue for the hearing. You may have space in your own building, or you may need to hire or borrow a space. Suitable venues for a hearing include church or school halls, community centres, civic centres, colleges or universities.

Remember to consider: what facilities you will need (eg catering, public address system, hearing loop, childcare); the capacity of the venue; the accessibility of the venue (including wheelchair access and public transport links); and the cost of hire.

Step 4: Publicise your hearing

You should publicise your event as widely as possible. It is a good idea to produce a **leaflet with a booking form**. You can circulate this, in print or as an email attachment, to: your own supporters and networks; local voluntary organisations; community networks; churches and church-based organisations; and the business sector.

You should also send a **press release** to your local and/or regional news media (including newspapers, websites, radio and TV) about a week before the event. Church Action on Poverty or Community Links can give you some advice on how to write a press release.

Step 5: Plan your finances

You should draw up a budget for your event, to help with your planning. The expenses involved in running a hearing might include: cost of venue; speakers' expenses; refreshments; crèche facilities; and publicity printing and postage.

Step 6: Invite people to the hearing

You should send out general invitations along with a covering letter, as far in advance of the hearing as you can. You might want to invite: MPs; church leaders; councillors; business people; trade union reps; academics; civil servants; other local government departments. Sometimes a personal visit to an MP's or councillor's surgery may help to persuade them to attend. Be sure to keep a record of all the invitations sent, in case you need to follow up on any of them.

Step 7: Hold your hearing – and record it

Recording the hearing will help you to feed back your findings, and maybe do future work on the issues that are raised. You could: make an audio recording of the speakers; take photographs during the event; take minutes or notes; record discussion points on a flipchart; and/or video the proceedings. You must ask for people's permission if you want to photograph, video or record them – get them to sign a consent form in advance of the event.

Step 8: Follow up and feed back

After the hearing, look through the notes or recordings you made at the hearing. Identify the three most important policies and/or 'myths' that emerge from the proceedings. Use the feedback form at the back of this pack, or visit www.surveymonkey.com/s/ey2010feedback, to report these. Please include contact details for all the people who took part in your event – you should be able to copy this information from your registration list.

You may also wish to produce a report from your poverty hearing and circulate it to those who attended – and also to those in positions of authority who did not attend. You could also develop a plan of action based on the recommendations made during the hearing.

Next steps for this year's activity

Please use this form to report the findings of your listening campaign. We'll use your findings in our campaigning work later in the year – and invite you to get involved!

Please enclose any additional materials you can – for example, transcripts of interviews, reports from events, video and audio clips or vox-pops.

Remember that you can also submit your feedback online at www.surveymonkey.com/s/ey2010feedback.

Name: _____

Organisation: _____

Address: _____

_____ Postcode: _____

Telephone number: _____

Email address: _____

What kind of listening campaign did you run? _____

How many people participated in your campaign? _____

How many people from each of the following categories took part?

Gender: Male _____ Female _____

Age: 0-16 ____ 17-25 ____ 26-35 ____ 36-50 ____ 51-65 ____ 66+ ____

Ethnic background: White ____ Black ____ Asian ____ Other ____

Please list below the three policy changes or myths that were identified by your listening campaign, and indicate which theme they relate to.

Policy or myth 1

Why did people select this policy or myth?

What impact does it have on people's lives?

How could we create the change that is needed?

In-work poverty Getting-into-work poverty Out-of-work poverty

Policy or myth 2

Why did people select this policy or myth?

What impact does it have on people's lives?

How could we create the change that is needed?

In-work poverty Getting-into-work poverty Out-of-work poverty

Policy or myth 3

Why did people select this policy or myth?

What impact does it have on people's lives?

How could we create the change that is needed?

In-work poverty Getting-into-work poverty Out-of-work poverty